

The Prairie Light Review

Volume 40 | Number 2

Article 44

Spring 5-1-2018

Almost Blue

Ronda Crawford
College of DuPage

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.cod.edu/plr>

Recommended Citation

Crawford, Ronda (2018) "Almost Blue," *The Prairie Light Review*: Vol. 40 : No. 2 , Article 44.
Available at: <https://dc.cod.edu/plr/vol40/iss2/44>

This Selection is brought to you for free and open access by the College Publications at DigitalCommons@COD. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Prairie Light Review by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@COD. For more information, please contact orenick@cod.edu.

Almost Blue

You should have deleted the number from your phone or at least changed the ringtone. The classic "Piano Riff," a gift from the ghost of a lover past. You pick up anyway.

"Yes," you say proud of the casual tone.

"Hey you." It just hangs there, and you wait.

"I just...how have you been?"

"Good. Thanks for asking." Absent of all sarcasm, no trace of bitterness or longing, you are proud of yourself, but it's still early in the game.

"I just bought a new leather jacket, and it has a made in India label."

"That's funny." You laugh despite yourself.

"See I knew when I saw it that you would get it. I showed it to five different people and none of them knew why it was so funny. But I knew... how have you been?" And there it is, that familiar rhythm of words, his I'm-being-sexy-without-trying candace.

"We've already covered that and it's been established that I am fine. So it's time to ask another qualifying question or get to the point. Either is fine, but I've got somewhere to be today so..."

Actually, you have nowhere to be; you are just creating an escape route, somewhere to run should he try any of his old Jedi mind tricks.

"I'm well. I'm over at McAlister's after the acquisition, doing some independent consulting under my own banner, but they are talking about making me partner--"

You almost say you are happy for him, after all the long hours of corporate climbing. All the late nights and weekends. How he learned to play golf even though he swore he would never. You remember how he used to make fun of those guys, now he was one of them. Of course he wants to celebrate.

"Don't," you say with more emotion than you intended.

Damn him. In fifty words or less, he has you trying to figure out what Rube Goldberg set of circumstances caused his elation or displeasure. Or don't you remember sitting in this exact same place for days, weeks, months trying to recreate or avoid his perfect storms. Perhaps you could at least recall the exhausted feeling of trying to figure out why, settling instead to an-

anticipate when, and how much it would hurt or feel good this time. And then everything changed when it became a who, and how you never saw that one coming.

"Don't what?" The feigning wide eyed innocent routine.

"Don't try and act as if no time has passed, and that we are going to pick up as if we just talked yesterday. I'm not feeling nostalgic right now. So either tell me what you want or get off my phone." You just pulled the trigger. Shots fired.

"No need to be hostile. Fine. I...I just...I just wanted someone to tell a funny story too. I wanted to talk to someone who I knew got it. Got me. Is that so wrong?"

He's in his car, pulled over making the call before he goes home. You hear the soft hum of familiar traffic, but not of movement. There is a murmur of music, but you can't make out the song, the volume is too low.

"You didn't want someone who got you. You had that, and it got old."

The words catch in the back of your throat leaving a taste in the mouth that only a really strong drink could wash away right now. Something bitter, with lots of ice, in a very tall glass, that would still burn a bit going down.

"You have every right to still have feelings about the way things ended. And I know it doesn't mean much but I'm sorry. I was...I miss you. There I put it out there first."

You have nothing to say, you don't even sigh, you just leave space for this long awkward silence.

"Honestly I didn't think you would answer. I had planned to leave a message about the leather jacket made in India. I thought it might be something that would make you smile. Something that might make you remember me fondly. Remember us."

As if on cue a soft focus montage of moments, good times, comes back to you. The two of you laughing at obscure inside jokes, of you two speaking your own intimate language, getting each other. And then as quickly as it comes it flickers out, sputtering to darkness, fading to an image of you on the floor of your shower naked and crying in secret.

"What do you want me to say. That I miss you too? Because if that's it..." you say.

And now is the moment you should hang up, but you don't because you want to know where this is going. You want to know why he called. The answer is almost inaudible. But it sounds like...

"Help me."

Crawford: Almost Blue

Please God, you think, anything but that. You have no witty comeback or cutting barb prepared for this kind of vulnerability. You can't confirm or deny its authenticity. You can pretend you didn't hear him. That's a safe thing, because pride won't let him say it a second time.

"What? I can barely hear you."

"*Bed's too big without you...*" he sang in a dead-on Sting impersonation only a little off key. "*Cold wind blows right through that open door...I can't sleep with your memory...Dreaming dreams of what used to be...*"

He would call you from the road when he was away on business, and before he would say a word he would sing, "Bed's too big without you..." And you would talk for hours, because back then you were best friends. He was your world.

"You know Sting wrote that about an ex-girlfriend who committed suicide after their break up right?"

You let the irony of that sink in like the juice of fresh lemon in a paper cut. This time he's the one laughing at your defensive moves against that dark charm.

"I'm out in front of your building right now. Will you let me come up? I just want to talk."

And there he is, the Jedi master returns, a year late, but ready with new feats of skullduggery. How much of you does he need this time? Did you appear like a desert oasis in his memory, a place where he can replenish himself before he goes on his way. How long would it take before you are doing the slow slide down that shower wall?

"What about the toddler?" And you smile, because he had hoped you would forget about her, at least until he could put his spin on the situation. I'm sure by now she didn't understand him.

"She's well over twenty-one, I wish you wouldn't..." His sigh defensive and tinged with the slightest hint of defeat.

"Go home," you say.

"She's not you. Almost but not quite. And I do miss you...us. So much." You can feel his powers failing him.

"I know. Just go home."

And with that you touch the red phone emblem that disconnects the two of you. With another touch you delete the number and with it the classic "Piano Riff" ringtone. Your final touch blocks the caller.

-Ronda Crawford